

Wise Words about the Meaning of Life

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Date: 11 March 2012

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[0 : 00] Well, friends, I want to begin this Bible talk with a little word of explanation. As you know, our normal pattern here at Holy Trinity is to work our way through a passage bit by bit, consecutively and systematically.

However, I think in order to really understand the book of Ecclesiastes, we need to understand how it fits into the Bible and into biblical thought. And so today we're not actually going to spend much time in the book of Ecclesiastes itself.

That will come in the succeeding weeks. What I'm going to try and do is to put Ecclesiastes into a larger biblical framework. Then I'm going to tell you how I think we should interpret the book.

And then I'm going to look at one or two particular verses within the book itself. And then finally, I'm going to tell you some of the implications that arise out of having the book in the Bible as Holy Scripture.

So with that said, I want you to stand up and bow your heads and we're going to pray together. So please join me in prayer. Our Father, we thank you for this book.

[1 : 13] We thank you for the fact that you have inscripturated it. You have put it within scripture and you have given it to us that it might make us wise for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

And it might teach and correct and admonish us and equip us for every good work. Father, we thank you for this. We pray today that you would enlighten us, help us.

And be at work in us by your spirit that our lives might be transformed. We know this is what you desire. We pray this in your son's name.

Amen. Great. Please sit down again. Now, I need to tell you that I don't really know the reason.

Actually, I'll find my place again because otherwise we're going to get really mucked up here. I don't know why I am the way that I am. And I don't even know where what I am comes from.

[2 : 14] But somewhere, somehow, I developed a strong sense of order. I love things in their right place. I have strong habits and daily routines.

I like things to be in proper place. I do not like surprises because they are the things that are out of order and out of place. So I've told my wife, for example, that it's reason for divorce to have a surprise birthday party.

Jokingly. But nevertheless, there is a serious element to me. It seems to me that life is better when it is planned and ordered. Life is unpredictable.

It has no surprises. It is more manageable. Perhaps that's why I tried, without much success, to bring some order into our family life. And to this day, our children will joke about my misused application of the words of the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 15.

Because I think Paul thinks like me, obviously. In verse 40, Paul says, All things should be done properly and in order. It's a great verse.

[3 : 25] You might like to write it above your desk somewhere. Friends, I don't think that I'm obsessive compulsive, but I do like a little bit of order in my life. I like things to be predictable and according to pattern.

Life is easier, more straightforward and more manageable if these things happen. When things are ordered, structured and predictable, well, life can go on in a good way. Now, jokes about my personality aside.

The whole question of order is something that I think is affirmed in and by God in the Old Testament. That is, I think I'm on the side of God in this area.

Think about it for a moment. Think about God's law. For example, the Ten Commandments are really, aren't they, a statement about proper order. God says that the proper way to relate to him is to have him alone as your God.

And the proper way for Jews to order their week is to have six days of labor and one day of rest. The proper way to run your family life is to be, and to order your family life is for children to honor their parents.

[4 : 38] The proper way for society to function is that people should not kill each other. They should not take each other's spouses or even think about it.

They should not steal each other's property. To live in this way, God says, is to please him. And the book of Deuteronomy tells us that if you live this way, there will be blessing.

And when you fail to live this way, well, there will be curse. Yes, I think that Old Testament law reinforces the idea of things in God's world being well ordered.

Now, the ministry of the prophets, I think, confirms this. It agrees. You see, the ministry of the Old Testament prophets was largely one of telling the people of God that really their lives were out of order, out of sync with God's law.

They needed to repent. And if they did, then God would reward them. If they did not, God would surely punish them. At other times, the prophets promised that God would act according to his character and be merciful and gracious.

[5 : 40] Yes, I think that Old Testament law and Old Testament prophets reinforces the idea of order. And you can see this in the sense of order, this sense of order in other places outside the law and the prophets.

So come with me. Open your Bibles to Psalm number one. Now, I'm not going to give you a page number because if you can't, no, look, if you open your Bible like this around about the middle, you will find a book of Psalms and you can find number one in it.

So have a look at Psalm one. Once you find it, you can easily, you know, have a quick skim through it. Psalm one starts off by saying that people are blessed who avoid company with certain groups of people.

They are blessed if they delight in God's law. And then it goes on to say, but the wicked are not so. You see, the wicked stand under the judgment of God. I wonder if you can hear what's going on here.

Psalm one is a very ordered Psalm in the sense that it's saying there is a proper ordering of God's world and blessing comes to the righteous and judgment comes upon the wicked.

[6 : 47] Now turn to Psalm 37. So Psalm 37. Psalm 37 is all about things being ordered and straightforward.

Just skim through it. You can see it for yourself. You just pick up the nuances within the passage. The reader is urged not to be fret, not to fret or be worried.

After all, you see, God is a God of order. He punishes the wicked. That's ordered. And he rewards and cares for the righteous. That tells you what God does and what he loves doing. The wicked will get curse and badness and the righteous will get good and blessing.

It's an ordered world. That's what God's saying. I do things in an ordered way. I do this to those people and I do that to these people. Now think about the book of Proverbs for a moment.

Hopefully you've all had a go at reading the book of Proverbs and the book of Proverbs reinforces this sense of order about the world. According to the Proverbs, there are two groups of people in the world.

[7 : 51] Sort of. There are the righteous and wise. That is the righteous and wise. And then there are the fools and the unrighteous. They're two groups of people. So you constantly hear about them.

The wise do this. The foolish do that. Being wise and righteous is the way of success and blessing. Being a fool and unrighteous is destined for failure and curse.

Now, let me give you an example. Turn with me to Proverbs chapter 10. Proverbs is easy to find in the Old Testament. You just keep going toward the back of your Bibles from Psalms and you'll hit Proverbs.

Next book on. Now, find it and find chapter 10 in Proverbs. And chapter 10, verse 1. I'm going to read just a section of about five or six verses.

Have a look at it with me. The Proverbs of Solomon. A wise child makes a glad father, but a foolish child is a mother's grief. Treasures gained by wickedness do not profit, but righteousness delivers from death.

[8 : 54] The Lord does not let the righteous go hungry, but he thwarts the craving of the wicked. A slack hand causes poverty, but the hand of the diligent makes rich.

A child who gathers in summer is prudent, but a child who sleeps in harvest brings shame. It's all about right ordering in life, isn't it? It's about if you do this, this is good.

And if you do that, that is bad. Everything is neat and tidy, isn't it? Everything's in its right place. Everything is predictable. Everything happens properly and in order.

So I wonder if you can see what I'm saying. The Old Testament affirms my sense of order. It affirms that God acts according to order and, if you like, predictability.

But anyone who is a thinking person can't help asking whether things are really that neat. Even in our society, we acknowledge it.

[9 : 55] Can you think of any various sayings that we have that acknowledge that things are not that neat? We have a saying that says, have you heard of this one? Only the good die young.

That's saying it doesn't, that ought not to happen. The good ought to live good long lives, but only the good die young. We also speak of Murphy's Law, which says that if anything can go wrong, it will.

That's not an ordered world, is it? Well, the Old Testament also contains voices that indicate that things are not always as neat, ordered and predictable as our earlier quotations would have indicated.

Earlier we looked at Psalm 37 in a wonderful twist of providence. God has caused the psalm that has in our letters, the reverse, 73, to say something very different.

Have a look at Psalm 73. It talks about someone who takes some time out and observes life. And in verse 1 of Psalm 73, he states something like what we heard in Psalm 37.

[11 : 01] Can you see it there? But then he goes on and he notes that when he looks at the real world that he encounters every day, he finds that the arrogant and the wicked do pretty well.

They don't do like Psalm 37 said they ought to do. In verse 12, he says, the wicked are always at ease and they increase in riches.

And then he notes his own situation. You see, he's someone who, like the ideal person of Psalm 1 and Psalm 37, works hard at being righteous. And what does he end up with?

Well, he ends up with being plagued and punished. It doesn't look like an ordered world at that point, does it? And God doesn't look as though he's acting in an ordered way according to plan. And the book of Job agrees with this.

The book of Job is all about this very question. You see, it talks about Job being righteous. It talks about, God talks about Job being righteous as well. And yet Job receives curse instead of blessing.

[12 : 07] All sorts of disasters are dumped upon Job in one way or another. His friends argue that because God is an ordered God, so they have this very straightforward idea that God is ordered.

Because God is an ordered God, always acts according to order, then Job cannot be righteous. Because if he was righteous, he would be getting good.

And Job says, no, I am righteous and I'm getting bad. Something is not working according to proper order. The friends are wrong.

And God states that the friends are wrong within the book of Job. In other words, in the book of Job, God is affirming that things are not always so straightforward, so predictable and so ordered.

And the book of Ecclesiastes agrees. It shows a world where things are not like they ought to be. It is a world where things are not predictable.

[13 : 11] The world of Ecclesiastes is a world that is not always ordered. Sometimes meaningless. Sometimes full of vanity. Sometimes fruitless. Sometimes enigmatic.

And sometimes confusing. Friends, the Bible is realistic about life. That's what I'm trying to tell you. And these sections and books of the Bible tell us that life is not the neat package we would like it to be.

And that we sometimes expect it to be. These parts of the Bible tell us life is messy. Life is messy.

It is not always straightforward. And God's actions in his world are not always predictable and not always easily understood. Life and relationship with God, we are told, can be messy.

It can be confusing. And these books tell us that this messy and sometimes confusing world exists. And in it, it is okay to ask questions.

[14 : 17] It is okay to affirm in God's world that things don't always make sense. It is okay to ask questions. Now, okay friends, with that in mind, let's turn to the book of Ecclesiastes.

Keep going if you're still in Psalms or Proverbs and head a bit further back past Proverbs and you'll hit Ecclesiastes. Now let me tell you a little bit about the book as a whole. This book, Ecclesiastes, is part of a group of literature within the Old Testament that people call, in inverted commas, wisdom literature.

These books include Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon and various other little bits of pieces scattered through the Old Testament.

These books explore the interaction between God and life. This group of writings are distinct in many ways, but they're distinct in three special ways.

Let me tell you the distinct ways. First, this group of writings is very different from the rest of the Old Testament. I want you to think about those books. Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon.

[15 : 25] What is not in them that is in the rest of the Old Testament? What is not in them that is in the rest of the Old Testament? Are there any prophets in them?

No. Sacrifices? Kings? Temples? Now a lot of those things are missing. You do get temples occasionally in the book of Ecclesiastes and so on, but there's not much mention of the normal things.

There's not much mention of history. There's not much mention of Israelite institutions and all of those sorts of things. That's the first thing to notice. Second thing to notice. This group of writings have their foundation in a thing called the fear of the Lord, which is the reverence of God.

The acknowledgement that God stands over all of the world. In fact, they share a common concern that the beginning of wisdom is fear of the Lord.

Third, this group of writings look at the world realistically. They address the hard questions of life and they do it rigorously. And sometimes this examination of life is done in cool abstraction.

[16 : 31] You know, you sit there and you study, as it were, and coolly reflect upon life. At other times, it's done in anguished sympathy, where people like Psalm 73, Psalmist, says, you know, how can this be?

How can this be like that? But all of it summons us to think hard, to think humbly, to keep our eyes open, to be honest about what we see, and to use our conscience and our common sense.

This group of literature urges us, don't run away from the hard and disturbing questions. Within this book of literature, the writer of Ecclesiastes is the most resolute and vicious raiser of questions.

I mean, he just doesn't let up. He goes all the time at it. He is an explorer. He's going out to the boundaries of life and saying, what can I find here?

Asking questions that most of us, I think, would hesitate to ask. Pushing the boundaries. That's who this man is. He's an extraordinary thinker, well ahead of his time.

[17 : 35] The book of Ecclesiastes is cynical almost to the extreme. The questions it poses are searching, if not cynical ones. The answers it puts forward are sometimes very disturbing.

The end results are that this book is different from anything else in scripture. And because of its strangeness, people have tried to work out, how do we interpret this book? What's it about?

Let me tell you three ways of interpreting Ecclesiastes. This is all background work, so you need to hang in with me today. There are some who say it is a holy, secular, humanistic book, not inspired by the Holy Spirit.

So let's ditch it. Let's discard it. There are some people who say it doesn't really belong in the Bible. However, it seems to me that God in his sovereignty has preserved it for us.

And therefore, that's not an option for us. We can't just throw it out. God's caused it to be put there. So you better deal with it. Struggle to interpret it. So here's the next way of approach. The second option has been favored by many Jews and Christians.

[18 : 37] Many evangelical interpreters, Bible-believing interpreters adopt this one. And this is what they do. They say, look, the aim of this book is to expose all the vanity of our worldly pursuits.

In other words, what the writer of Ecclesiastes is doing is exposing the vanity of things, and you use the inverted commas, under the sun, life under the sun.

And by doing this, the writer is wanting to direct our minds and our spirits to the higher things of God. Now, some would fine-tune this a little bit. They'd say the aim of the reader is to expose the pointlessness of life without God.

These people say that the author of Ecclesiastes is a man of faith himself. However, what he's doing is he has temporarily put himself, you know, sort of stepped out of his believer shoes, and he's stepped into his unbeliever shoes.

So there he stands, and he's in unbeliever shoes, and he then proceeds to describe what he finds in life hypothetically. He says, this is what life must be like for the person who is an unbeliever.

[19 : 47] In this view, the book is a piece of ventriloquism. Do you remember the ventriloquist sort of puppets? Okay. In other words, it's designed to, it's a piece of pre-evangelism designed to strip away the illusions that unbelievers have about life.

And what the writer has done is he's put himself in, you know, he's not really who he is. He does so in order to direct the reader toward God. And once the reader finds God, they can put faith in him.

Now, it seems to me that this is really inadequate. It's a very common view, but it's inadequate. Because what it is, is it makes this book a piece of ventriloquism. In other words, the writer is putting his words in the mouth of someone else, saying things that he himself doesn't believe.

But when you read through Ecclesiastes, I reckon Ecclesiastes looks as though he believes everything he says. He's convinced. The author appears to be personally convinced of his views, no matter how pessimistic they are.

He's convinced by his views. And he's personally also convinced that God is real and in total control of the universe. In other words, there's a two-sided tension within the book.

[20 : 58] So I'm convinced, not convinced, by the traditional way of interpreting this book. Let me tell you how I think it goes. I think there's another way. I think what we should do with this book is see that it's a book of tension between the world as it ought to be and the world as it is.

The world as it ought to be is a world like Psalm 37. A world where righteousness prospers and where wickedness doesn't. It is the sort of world that the person of faith believes in.

However, friends, let me tell you, if you haven't encountered this in life already, you will. Well, the world that we live in doesn't work like that. Harsh experience teaches us otherwise.

The world is often unjust and absurd. Often the good die young and the ungodly prosper, as Psalm 73 makes clear.

The world in which we live and the world that we look at is a world full of tension. We know what God's intention for this world is. But it doesn't often happen that way.

[22 : 10] It doesn't always happen that way. And this tension becomes all the much more sharper if you believe in God. You see, let me explain this for a moment. You see, a tension doesn't exist, does it?

If you're a consistent atheist. You don't have the problem. Not if you're consistent. You could just rightly say, why should it be otherwise? It's a world that no one's in control.

Why shouldn't it just be weird? And things not happen the way that they should. Nor does it exist for the person who is a polytheist.

Because, you know, a person who's a polytheist who believes in many gods would just say something like this. Well, what would you expect in a world where you've got rival gods? They're all fighting. Some of them are good. Some of them are bad. Some don't know what they are.

And they're fighting for supremacy. Well, they'll all get conflicted, won't they? And they'll all get enmeshed. Enmeshed and the world will be a confusing place.

[23 : 06] No, the tension only logically exists for the person who accepts that God is good and in control. If you believe that, then what happens when you find evil in the world?

And unorder in the world? You've got a problem, haven't you? You see, so what Ecclesiastes is, is an honest assessment of the world as fallen under the curse of God because of sin.

You see, when humanity sinned in Genesis 3, they sentenced the world to this sort of existence, futility and meaninglessness. Now, I'll deal with the links with Genesis and Ecclesiastes later on.

But now, I want to move on. I want you to open up at Ecclesiastes and I want you to look at chapter 1, verse 2. This is the thesis statement of the book. Look at it there.

Some of you will have other versions of the Bible and I'm going to cite from some of those. This one says, Vanity of vanities, says the teacher. Vanity of vanities. All is vanity.

[24 : 08] Now, they don't mean, you know, people like people looking in the mirror being vain. It means pointless. No, not fruitful. The NIV puts it better, I think.

Meaningless, meaningless. Utterly meaningless. Everything is meaningless. Nothing much escapes, does it, if you say it that way. The Holman Christian Standard Bible puts it this way.

Absolute futility. Absolute futility. Everything is futile. Throughout the first half of the book, we're given variants of this.

And it's repeated in various forms. In the first half, we hear, All is vanity and a chasing after wind. Or we hear, This is also vanity and a chasing after wind. The key word in this statement is a word that the NRSV translates as vanity.

And it's got this whole range of meaning, which is why you have everyone interpreting it differently. Literally, the word used here for vanity is breath or breeze. However, it's generally interpreted sort of metaphorically in the Old Testament.

[25 : 13] And so when it's interpreted this other way, it can mean, Here's the range of meanings. Worthless. Meaningless. Futile.

Irrational. Unreasonable. Incomprehensible. Absurd. Mysterious. Ephemeral. That is something that quickly passes by.

Incongruous or ironic. Ambiguous or even enigmatic. You get the thrust of it, don't you? It's something like a breeze that sort of, You can't nail down.

But it just seems to pass away. And it might have overtones of all of those things. Whatever it means, Verse 3 should be read to give some flesh to it. Have a look at verse 3. Look at what it says. The writer tells us.

And I'll read from verse 2 just to make it clear. The writer says, Vanity of vanity, says the teacher. Vanity of vanities. All is vanity. What do people gain from all the toil at which they toil Under the sun?

[26 : 14] When you put the negative aspects and positive, Possible meanings of this word with the additional statement in verse 3, It's a very dark picture, isn't it? The writer's thesis is very, very dark.

It is repeated time after time. In case you didn't get it in verse 2, He's going to repeat it time and time again. Half the turn up of this word in the Old Testament occurs in Ecclesiastes.

The writer's thesis is very dark. The impression of what he's saying is that all is untrustworthy, Enigmatic, insubstantial, fruitless, unable to be depended upon.

You can't tie it down just like you can't tie down a breeze. And by all, he means all. Everything. He's saying all earthly endeavor, All experiences are under the spotlight.

And he's saying all observation of the world, True observation of the world will prove it. Personal experience will prove it. Participation in the world will prove it.

[27 : 23] Honest reflection on the world will prove it. Everything is vanity. Meaningless. Utterly meaningless. Friends, this is the central thesis of the book.

This is his heading. And for the next few weeks, We're going to follow this author through observation, experience, Participation and reflection. He's going to try and nail down everything that you think life can be found in.

And he's going to say, It's a chasing after wind. He's going to not pull his punches. He's going to allow, He's not going to allow us to put our heads in the sand.

So we're in for a very interesting ride in the next three weeks. Make sure you don't miss out. Make sure you bring your friends, And particularly bring your non-Christian friends, Because this speaks to our world.

The Bible that we are looking at, Looks at life really. Now, I should say, That not all the writer of Ecclesiastes, Sorry, That not all that the writer says is dark.

[28 : 26] I want to give you some examples. There's some very positive things he has to say. Turn to chapter 3 with me. Chapter 3. And I want you to look at verses 12 and 13.

If you're reading through Ecclesiastes, Every now and then you get, As I have been in my Bible reading this last couple of weeks, The writer has really helpfully given you some bright spots every now and then.

You read through and you think, Oh, this is a bit overwhelming. Perhaps I'll go back and read Proverbs again. And then he gives you this little bright light. Have a look at it. 12 and 13.

He says this. I know that there's nothing better for them Than to be happy. And to enjoy themselves as long as they live.

Moreover, it is God's gift That all should eat and drink and take pleasure in their toil. I know that whatever God does endures forever And nothing can be added to it Nor anything taken from it.

[29 : 29] God has done this So that all should stand in awe before him. You see, there's a little bright spot. Enjoy life. Enjoy the good things that come in life. So there is some bright spot.

Now I want you to flip to chapter 9 And look at verses 7 to 9. So chapter 9 Verses 7 to 9 It says this. Go Eat your bread with enjoyment And think Sorry, and drink your wine with a merry heart For God has long ago approved of what you do.

Let your garments always be white. Do not let oil be lacking on your head. Enjoy life with the wife whom you love All the days of your vain life.

He doesn't, he just, you know It's bright and then he just drops the word in That you are given That has been given to you under the sun Because that is your portion in life And in all your toil At which you toil under the sun Whatever your hand finds to do Do with your might For there is no work or thought Or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol To which you are going So there's this sort of odd mix, isn't there?

Right? Bright and dark He is a dark man, isn't he? You wouldn't want to go out to dinner with him I think For too long These statements though Occur regularly during the book And so he may have dark thesis But he doesn't see that everything's pointless No, he's really saying Life is to be embraced Its benefits are to be enjoyed These come from the hand of God And it is While sin may make life somewhat confusing And enigmatic And vain or meaningless It hasn't overcome God's grace And God's grace can still give life fullness God is still the overseer of the world And because of his goodness There's still positive experiences To be had and embraced So friends There's my introduction to the book I'm sorry it's a bit technical tonight But we needed to do it I've given you the context In which it fits in the Bible I've told you how to interpret it I've given you its main thesis Now I'm going to wrap things up By saying Giving you some ideas About what we should do

[31 : 45] With this weird And wonderful piece of scripture Here's my suggestions First thing Rejoice We should rejoice In the presence Of this book In scripture Because here is a book That I can read And identify with Particularly as an ordered man Because the world I encountered Is not always this ordered It is a book That speaks to the world We live in You see We can rejoice That God gave us The song of Solomon To tell us about love And sex And we can also Rejoice that he gave us The book of Ecclesiastes To speak About other aspects Of life That we encounter Every day And that people Have noticed And written about First thing We can rejoice Second thing We can accept God's endorsement Of this book Ecclesiastes Is God's endorsement That it is okay To observe life As it is And to ask The hard questions

About what we find there God shows It is okay By saying Here I've put this book In scripture That has all the questions You wanted to ask But were afraid to It's there Go and read it I think it's alright To ask those questions Third thing you can do Is join in Friends If you haven't ever felt Some of the aspects That Ecclesiastes Has felt Then you've led A very narrow life If you And it's And what this says is Oh in fact I ought to say more If you haven't ever thought The way that Ecclesiastes Thinks Then You've got a pretty Confined brain I think Because You only have to Look at life And it will raise Questions for you Just think about Syria This day And the people Suffering there And start asking Questions And you'll soon Get to the questions The rite of Ecclesiastes

Gets to Friends It is okay To think It is okay To ask questions It is okay To identify With what this writer Says And it's okay To join it In with the questions That he poses Next thing Is to determine To be honest With life As he is Friends Learn from this writer Do not Fudge with life Be honest Life is full Of enigmas And apparent Frustrations And contradictions And ambiguities And signs Of futility Be honest That's what We see And if you Haven't seen it Yet you will Friends Be honest About this You see I have a Grandson Who nearly Didn't make it Past day two And who Spent Three weeks

In intensive Care And we Don't know What long Term impact It will Have on Him I must Ask God About that It raises All sorts Of questions Doesn't It It's right What this Book says It's right To ask The questions It's right To take Those things To God It is Right To pose The questions And not Be afraid However As you Read this Book And you Engage With it Please Remember That this Word is Not the Last word On the Subjects He addresses God's Definitive Word is In Jesus And God's Definitive Word in Jesus Comes after This piece Of work So read This work In the Light of The later Revelation That comes In Jesus Friends I Wonder if I Can just Close with Some parting Applications Okay My experience With Christians And particularly

With young Christians Is that they Don't like Is that they Like simple Answers Some very Old Christians Like simple Answers as Well But there Are Christians Who do not Like people Asking Questions You might Have met Them in Bible study Groups Have you Where someone Raised a Question And sort Of just Pushed a Bit under The surface So that we Don't have To you know Come to Grits with It or It's given A simple Answer People don't Like thinking Sometimes and Christians Particularly That life Can be Messy They don't Know how To handle The rough Edges And messiness Of life But life Has rough Edges Life Is messy Life Is confusing At times And faith Has rough Edges And faith Also is Fraught and Mixed with Unfaith and Doubt

[36 : 46] And that's Okay Don't be Afraid of It Don't fear It Ask Questions Investigate Shout Out Cry away And if You have People who Are doing That Shouting Out And crying Away Then shout And cry With them And acknowledge That this Is life As it Is encountered Feel what They feel All of This is Okay But remember The cross Remember That it Too Looked like The ultimate Futile And meaningless Event Didn't it I can Imagine the Disciples Looking And thinking Here is the One we Had come To think Was Messiah And they Watched him His life Ebb away On the Cross What would You be Thinking if You were A disciple You'd be Thinking How can

This Happen How futile Is this That this Man Should die In that Way They had no Understanding of What was going On it only Came to them Later on Post Resurrection Remember Remember that On the Cross It looked Like a Dead End And then Remember the Victory And remember The resolution And remember That that's where God's heading Eventually That's where he's Heading now That's where he's Heading even Through these Things that Happen That's where he's Going Remember that God's Okay Let's pray Father we Thank you for This marvelous Book and we Pray that in The next Two or three Weeks as we Look at its Details and Work through Its passages That you Would help Us to Ask the Questions And to

See what Answers you Give And to be Frank and Honest And not to Fudge Please help Us with this Father we Pray And we Thank you for This book In Jesus name Amen So thanks For sticking With me Tonight